May a Song Remain Among Us
*Virtual Choirs & Recorded Hymns*

During these days of distance, technology such as video calling and conferencing keeps us wonderfully connected with loved ones, colleagues, students and friends. At the same time, relying solely on electronic devices for human connection has drastically hindered many of our valued experiences.

**Communal music-making is one of those areas deeply affected by our separation.** The congregational song of our gathered community, the anthems of our choirs or music of our orchestra are sadly silenced for a while. School and church choirs have tried to create virtual choirs with varying degrees of success. Individuals record their parts and send them to an audio/video engineer who then applies skill and many hours of work to sync the voices into the final recording (one engineer noted it took 100 hours of work for one virtual performance!). While virtual choirs can offer a pleasing musical product, they are produced in isolation and can’t replace the experience of people singing or playing together in the same space.

I’ve learned about this recently as I had wondered whether or not a virtual “Hallelujah” chorus could be achieved for Easter at Pullen. After discovering the facts about how virtual performances are produced, I realized it would be much better to experience our Easter “Hallelujah” when we are all back together. A choir in England helped solidify this thinking when they tried a virtual choir without the aid of engineering. They were good-hearted in sharing their attempt with the world. *Enjoy a chuckle with them as you listen:* [https://www.facebook.com/403233109740112/posts/3007774209285976/?vh=e&d=n](https://www.facebook.com/403233109740112/posts/3007774209285976/?vh=e&d=n)

In 2007, the Pullen Music Ministry produced a professionally-recorded CD of “Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians” by Jann Aldredge-Clanton and myself. The recording included our congregation, choirs and orchestra. Jann took various selections from the CD and created *YouTube* music videos with images to interpret the words. *For some inspiration in the coming days, view, listen and sing along to the sounds of Pullen voices and instruments! Here’s a playlist:*

**God Like a Woman Long in Labor Cries** [Chancel Choir]
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbQuEaKgxy4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbQuEaKgxy4)
A hymn expressing the divine who labors and cries with us.

**Creator God of Many Names** [Congregation, Pullen Orchestra]
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJLU1Y030uM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJLU1Y030uM)
A praiseful exclamation to the divine known in countless ways.

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**O Spirit of Power** [Chancel Choir, Soloist: Deanna Figgins]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEBo_z32pt0
A hymn for courage.

**Ruah Breath of Life/Jesus, Bread of Life**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TB9EgGQC6uM
A meditative prayer to Ruah/Spirit for breath, and Jesus/Bread, for strength.

**Our God is a Mother and a Father, Too** [Children’s Choir]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzo6luaSbTI&t=2s
A song dancing and celebrating God known through our families.

**O Mother-Father God** [Pullen Orchestra, Chancel Choir]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7a3pbqc0lk
A hymn finding the divine in creation’s spring.

**Come Unto Me, You Weary Ones** [Duet: Amelia Mahan & Ken Babb, Chancel Choir, Orchestra]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LGzC0w9hx4
An invitation to rest upon the divine.

**Womb of All Creation Flowing** [Chancel Choir]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O08rI_AN15M
A hymn reframing the darkness and isolation of the womb as sacred and wondrous.

**Come Now, O Wisdom** [Congregation, Pullen Orchestra]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gV2fqJeyBmc
A positive, hopeful prayer to Holy Wisdom.

**Let Justice, Like Waters Roll Down** [Congregation]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOfcShisXgU
A hymn for personal and communal justice and freedom.

**Sister-Spirit, Brother Spirit** [Pullen Orchestra, Congregation]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94f1merTY-Y&t=66s
With Easter Alleluias, a celebrative hymn of new life.

Take a moment to imagine what it is going to be like when we are able to gather again at Pullen to sing and to play music together. Don’t you think it is going to be glorious?! I’m imagining that when the time arrives, our songs of welcome will be proclaimed “from floor to rafter” as never before!

Whether near or far apart, may a song remain!

Larry E. Schultz, Minister of Music

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i from “Imagine God” by Jann Aldredge-Clanton & Larry E. Schultz © 2004 Choristers Guild.
ii quote from “All Are Welcome” by Marty Haugen. © 1994, GIA Publications, Inc.